

### Book Reviews

JOHN CULE (editor), *Wales and medicine. An historical survey*, London, British Society for the History of Medicine (Llandysul, J. D. Lewis), 1975, 8vo, pp. xi, 249, illus., £3.00.

In September of 1973 the Ninth British Congress on the History of Medicine was held at Swansea and Cardiff. Twenty-three of the papers presented have now been collected together by Dr. John Cule, the authority on the history of medicine in Wales, to form a volume both scholarly and attractive.

As with most books of this type the individual articles are of uneven value as regards content, presentation, scholarship, and documentation. There are several slender pieces, but on the other hand there are a number of important additions to our knowledge of the topic. Of the twenty-three, twelve are concerned wholly or in part with biographical accounts of outstanding medical practitioners or of men of note and influence in Welsh medicine who were either Welsh or had contacts with Wales; they range from the medieval physicians of Myddfai to Sir Thomas Lewis and David Lloyd George. Appropriately there is a group of articles dealing with occupational disorders: dust diseases, coal miners' skin diseases, and nickel toxicity. 'The interaction of war and plague in the later Middle Ages', 'Pestis flava: y fad felen', 'Meddygon Myddfai', and 'Beved Feddyg: a Welsh medical practitioner in the late medieval period' are all scholarly articles dealing with medical aspects of the Middle Ages.

Each paper is well presented, many are fully documented, and there are a number of supporting illustrations, some of which, however, have reproduced poorly. The editor in particular is to be congratulated for the great labour that is inevitably associated with a publication of this nature. He and his contributors have produced a most attractive book which without doubt will achieve a wide popularity, especially in the Principality. It is the first book devoted entirely to medicine in Wales, and we look forward to more of its kind, which will bring together medical men and historians with the common aim of presenting aspects of local British medical history. It will be a challenge to them to produce an excellent book like this one and at such a modest price. Today when books of merit rarely cost less than five pounds, a volume of 250 pages with fifteen plates, two of which are in colour, offered at the give-away sum of £3.00, reflects great credit on the group of devoted Welshmen who made it possible.

ARNOLD PACEY, *The maze of ingenuity. Ideas and idealism in the development of technology*, London, Allen Lane, 1974, 8vo, pp. 350, illus., £5.50.

There is still a great deal of work to be done in the field of the history of technology. This book is a notable contribution to the subject, and it surveys changes in ideas and outlook that have accompanied the development of technology in Europe from about 1100 to 1870. However, unlike many histories of this subject, it is not merely a record in chronological sequence of man's mechanical ingenuity, versatility and progression. The author, who is a physicist by training and has been a lecturer in the history of technology at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, is especially concerned with the intellectual and philosophical themes in the history of technology. As he points out, there are too few books on this vital aspect,

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due to an inadequate recognition of certain problems in modern technology. His book, therefore, has two themes: the evolution of technology, and a discussion of the ideas and objectives of the 1970s. Throughout, it is well written and fully documented with footnotes and a bibliography. It is intended for those with a general interest in the subject and therefore the historical narrative is non-technical, except for some parts of the discussion on the twentieth century.

Technology is an integral part of our culture and, therefore, just as the development of medicine cannot be considered in isolation, so the history of technology must be studied in relationship with science, architecture, religion, and literature, the so-called external influences of Shryock. Only by this method can its problems and advancement, or lack of advancement, be adequately appreciated, and only history looked at in this way can help us with present-day problems. Moreover, as with the history of science and of medicine, so with technology. It is the consideration of ideas that lifts the discipline from the level of antiquarianism to that of true history. The element of comparison with other cultures also adds depths to the subject. Thus the technical achievement of India and China compared with that of Europe is an important consideration, for it has proved of great economic significance to both East and West. In the final chapter, the author discusses present-day attitudes to technology and relates them to their origins in history.

Dr. Pacey has produced a most interesting and thought-provoking book. He has raised many questions and opened the way for considerable research into what may be termed the *new* history of technology. This, of course, is of great importance to the historian of medicine, who includes technology among the external factors influencing the creation and perpetuation of medical ideas. Just as Pacey asks what our philosophy of technology should be in the 1970s, we too have to consider its increasingly intimate association with medicine. Here the issues are frequently emotive, involving as they do the partial or total replacement of man by machines. The relative role of each has yet to be deduced.

This book deserves a wide distribution, and as far as historians of medicine are concerned, they should all read it, irrespective of their special areas of study.

ERWIN H. ACKERKNECHT and HEINRICH BUESS, *Kurze Geschichte der grossen Schweizer Ärzte*, Bern, Stuttgart, Vienna, H. Huber, 1975, 8vo, pp. 110, illus., DM.22.

Despite its small population Switzerland has contributed importantly to the advancement of medicine, due to the endeavours of many illustrious men. Two outstanding Swiss historians of medicine describe this process from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, from Paracelsus to Daniel Bovet (born 1907) who received a Nobel prize for medicine in 1957, on account of his discoveries relating to synthetic compounds that inhibit the action of certain body substances.

There is a brief but useful bibliography and a name index. This is an excellent book, which traces briefly the history of Swiss medicine as well as the work of those who have given it a high reputation. It can be strongly recommended. It is curious that no one has thought of producing a similar book on British medicine.